

THEIR CITY CHRISTMAS

ABBIE FARWELL BROWN.







By Abbie Farwell Brown

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- THEIR CITY CHRISTMAS. Illustrated.
THE CHRISTMAS ANGEL. Illustrated.
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THE LONESOMEST DOLL. Illustrated.

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THEIR CITY CHRISTMAS



"ALICE SEEMED TO ENJOY THE FUN AS MUCH AS THEY DID" (*page 16*)

THEIR CITY CHRISTMAS

A Story for Boys and Girls

BY

ABbie FARWELL BROWN

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

SEARS GALLAGHER



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TO
DR. MAURICE H. RICHARDSON
WITH GRATITUDE

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THEIR CITY CHRISTMAS

CHAPTER I

CHRISTMAS EVE

IT was the day before Christmas. The Hedges twins, Jane and John, on their first visit to the city from their far-off Maine island, sat in a corner of the Windsors' cheerful library, gloomily fingering the simple little gifts which they had brought for their friends.

The twins had no money to spend on presents. It had taken all that their father, who was a fisherman, could spare to send them to the city. And their gifts they had made with their own hands. They knew that their little host and hostess would give presents far more valuable than these. Polly

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and Phil Windsor were their neighbors in summer, living quite simply; but in the winter it was different. The Windsors' comfortable home seemed a palace to the twins, who believed that their friends could buy whatever they wished, to keep or give away. Everything seemed so fine and expensive, and everybody seemed so generous, that John and Jane were ashamed of their small offerings.

The twins had talked it all over, and had decided that it would be easier to give their presents straightway, than to wait until Christmas Day. But they miserably dreaded to do it. While they waited, there was a sound of voices in the hall, and Polly and Phil came dancing in.

“What are you twins conspiring now?” teased Phil.

“It’s Christmas presents, I know!” cried

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Polly laughingly. "I can hardly wait until to-morrow."

"You need n't wait," said Jane, turning very red and handing two little packages awkwardly to her host and hostess. "Here! we are going to give you our presents now. We've only got such little things, we're ashamed of them. It's the best we had."

"Why — shall we look at them *now?*?" Phil and Polly accepted the gifts, wondering why the twins were so embarrassed.

"Oh, how nice!" cried Polly, when she saw her little handkerchief-case pieced from scraps of silk.

"By Jove; that's just what I wanted!" said Phil, who had one like it. "Did you make it yourself, Jane?"

Jane nodded shyly. She could hardly believe it, but they seemed really pleased.

"Oh, Phil, just see what John has given

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me!" cried Polly, holding up a little pendant of green stone set in copper.

"I say! And where did you get these, John?" asked Phil, examining the watch-fob of similar materials, which his package contained. "You did n't make them, I'll bet."

"Yes, I did," said John sheepishly. "'T is n't anything. I found the stones in a ledge on the Island, and I hammered the copper in Uncle Ned's blacksmith-shop. I saw a picture something like it in a magazine sometime ago."

"It's lovely!" asserted Polly, who really seemed to mean it, every word. "I shall wear mine to-night on my chain."

John grinned with gratification.

"Now I call these *real* Christmas presents," said Phil enthusiastically. "You thought them up and made them yourselves.

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Things that folks just buy don't count for half as much, — do they, Polly?"

"No, indeed, they don't," said Polly. "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid our presents are all just boughten ones; and we did n't even earn the money to buy them. Your kinds are nicest, Twins. 'Deed and 'deed they are!"

"I never thought of that," said Jane happily. And John looked delighted. The Windsors' kind words had changed the spirit of the day for the twins.

It was time for the girls to dress, and again Jane had a qualm. What would Polly think of her green challis and pink ribbons? It was her best dress, and at home on the Island it had seemed quite splendid; but now she felt just as she had done about her presents. She hung back, and looked shamefacedly at the little dress laid out on her bed all ready to wear.

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"What are you going to wear, Polly?" she asked with a rather wistful look.

"Oh, I shall wear green too," said Polly cheerfully. "It will look pretty with my new necklace." And Jane gave a sigh of relief. She did not know that kind little Polly had changed her plan rapidly, and that the green dress was her third-best.

Quite in Island fashion they had an early supper that night, for there was much to be done before bedtime. It was growing dark when they rose from the table, and the moon was not yet up; a crisp, sparkling winter evening, with just enough snow to make it Christmasy — a fine, light snow that sparkled evenly like the snow on Christmas cards.

"Now, children, it is time to light the candles," said Mrs. Windsor, pulling up the

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shades. Then Jane and John saw that in every window of the Windsor library stood seven tall candles ready for lighting.

"Oh, what is it for?" asked Jane, very much excited.

"We do this every Christmas Eve in our part of the city," answered Polly. "It is an old custom to light the little Christ-child when He comes on His way through the streets to-night."

"Oh!" said Jane, wondering greatly.

"What a waste of candles!" commented John, thinking how long such a supply would last them at home on the Island.

"You won't call it a waste when you see how pretty they look, and how everyone enjoys them," said Polly.

"Come along!" cried Phil. "I'll light the attic candles; and you do those in the upper chambers, Polly. You can attend to this

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floor, Jane, and let John light those in the dining-room. Now, then; let's see who'll finish first!" Each of the four took a wax taper and hurried away to fill every window in the house with light, above the wreaths of green.

It was pretty to see the rows of candles blossom under their hands, and it was wonderful how the rooms became beautiful in the unusual glare. Other flitting figures in other houses were doing the same thing, and soon rows of candles along the street answered the illumination of theirs, making the houses look like great lanterns, glorious within.

"It is like a Christmas card," said Jane rapturously. "It is so beautiful, it almost makes me want to cry!"

Block after block of sombre houses bloomed into beauty, and they could see the faces of the passers-by shining with a reflec-

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tion of the house-lights as they looked up and smiled at the pretty sight, exchanging Christmas greetings with strangers, and filled with a spirit of kindness. No, the candles were not wasted!

Suddenly there came from the street below the sound of music. Fresh young voices were singing the old Christmas carol, "Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful." The children flattened their noses on the frosty panes, and saw a little group gathered on the sidewalk, singing lustily and stamping the time to keep warm, for Jack Frost had pinched their cheeks rosy.

"How lovely!" cried Jane. "They are singing for us. See them look up here."

"Yes," said Phil. "It is our boys and girls. They have come to collect us. We are going around to sing carols in a lot of places. Put on your sweaters, girls, and

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hurry up! It's too cold to keep them waiting."

"I never heard of singing carols," said Jane, who thought it the prettiest custom in the world. "Why do you do it, Phil?"

"It is an old custom, dear," answered Mrs. Windsor. "We keep it up in this city, though I don't know that they do elsewhere in the country. The Waits always went about from door to door on Christmas Eve, singing the ancient songs. I suppose it was originally in memory of the angelic choir who sang 'Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men,' to express their joy on that first Christmas Eve."

"And people used to ask the Waits in, and give them presents and cakes and nice things to drink," explained Polly, wriggling into her coat-sleeves.

"Do they do that now?" asked Jane.

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"You wait and see," said Polly. "It is such fun!"

"I don't want to go," said Jane bashfully. "I don't know the boys and girls. They won't want me."

"Yes, they will," cried Polly, drawing Jane after her. "They need you to help sing."

"But I can't sing," protested Jane.

"Nonsense! You sing better than any of us," laughed Phil. "Come on! They're getting impatient." Indeed, the doorbell was pealing vigorously, and voices were heard talking and laughing in the hall. A dozen boys and girls were waiting for them, ready for a frolic.

Polly introduced "my friends the Hodges twins from Maine," and they all set off merrily, Jane keeping close to Polly, and John lagging behind to escape notice. Phil was

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the leader, as usual. He led them through the snowy streets, past rows of lighted windows, to a house in a quiet square.

"Now let's sing for Tom Turner," he cried. "Come on — 'Once in Royal David's City.' One — two — three!"

"Tom has the measles,— such a Christmas present! Is n't it a shame?" whispered Polly to Jane. "He's our best singer, too, and I'm sorry he is sick."

The sweet old hymn went ringing through the air. Passers-by stopped to listen. Faces appeared in the neighboring windows. Voices of unknown singers chimed in out of the candle-lighted night. Jane and John piped the tune lustily, forgetting to be afraid of anyone, and their hearts were full of sweet excitement.

"You sing beautifully," said a little girl standing next to Jane.

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"Oh, no!" protested Jane, who could not believe her ears. "But it's a lovely tune, is n't it?" And straightway she and Blanche Noble were friends.

From Tom Turner's house, Phil led them to the home of their favorite teacher, where they sang several carols with great gusto. Presently the teacher herself came to the window and, with a merry "Thank you!" tossed out an armful of oranges which fell tumbling in the snow. The children scrambled for them with merry squeaks, and the twins each secured a prize. Next they went in turn to the houses of the different children who were singing, and caroled for the fathers and mothers. It was great fun, singing in the moonlight in front of the candle-lighted houses, and with jolly companions whose whole hearts were in it. Lights and greens and happiness everywhere abroad; it

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was like a beautiful dream to the Island Twins who had never before had a Christmas quite like this.

But it was growing late and colder. "Now, then; just one more place," announced Phil. "We'll go last to Alice Rowell's house, and we must sing our best for her. Let's run to keep warm. It's quite a distance, you see, so we shall get some exercise."

Off they ran, laughing, and skipping, and sliding along the slippery sidewalks, doubling sharp corners to the danger of belated shoppers bearing mysterious Christmasy burdens. But everybody was good-natured. All whom they met laughed and greeted them kindly. For was it not Christmas Eve, when a loving spirit was abroad?

At last Phil halted them before a big

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candle-illumined house on a broad avenue. "Here's the place. Now then: 'When Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night.' Come!" he cried urgently, eager for them to sing their very best.

"Alice is lame, and can't come with us," said Polly to Jane. "She is a darling! We always come to her last with the nicest carols of all."

They sang heartily for Alice, thrashing their arms and jumping up and down to keep warm. When the carol was finished, the door opened, and a gentleman stood on the top step.

"Thank you, boys and girls," he said. "The singing was fine! Alice is delighted, and now she wants you all to come in. Phil, you lead the way."

"I told you something might happen," whispered Polly, drawing Jane forward.

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John followed bashfully, feeling very much excited, but rather strange.

Alice was sitting in front of the fire with her crutches beside her. She was about Polly's age. Her eyes were very bright, and she greeted the children gaily. Jane wondered how a lame girl could be so happy. Alice made them take off their wraps and gather around the cozy fire, and tell her all about the evening. She seemed to enjoy the fun as much as they did, though she could not join in it herself.

Presently, in came maids bearing trays of goodies, which they set down on little tables: hot rolls, and chicken, and foamy chocolate which warmed up the singers, and ices which pleasantly cooled them off again; and there was a wonderful pudding of bran, with cotton-batting frosting, in which each guest dipped a spoon and helped himself to a tiny

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box containing some pretty gift — a silver pin, cuff-links, brooch, or buckle — beautiful presents, and just what each one liked.

"It is like the old times, after all, is n't it?" whispered John to Jane.

In the midst of the fun, Alice's father, who was an artist, came up and examined Polly's necklace. "Hello, my dear," said he, with surprise, "where did you get this?"

"John made it for me," said Polly promptly, "and he made Phil a watch-fob, too."

"Really!" said the artist. "Prettiest things I ever saw. But who is John?" and he looked about with an air of great interest.

John was introduced, red and awkward. But Mr. Rowell soon put him at his ease, asking questions which he answered intelligently.

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“Do you know, lad, that you have something very beautiful there?” said the artist. “That green stone is beryl, semi-precious, and of a lovely color. If, as you say, there is a ledge of the stuff on your father’s place, and if you can make such pretty things as these without instruction, some day you can make your fortune.”

John stared.

“Do you mean it, sir?” he asked.

“Mean it? Yes, indeed, I do!” cried Mr. Rowell. “And to prove it I will order a necklace like this for my Alice, and I’ll give you twenty dollars for it. Hey, Alice! How will you like that?” and he laid his hand gently on the little girl’s shoulder, looking down lovingly into her face.

Alice smiled sweetly. “I should love it,” she said.

But John hesitated. “I can’t make you

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one just like that, sir," he said. "That is Polly's own. No one must have one just the same; but if you say so, I will make you a different one that will be about as good."

Mr. Rowell laughed.

"That is frank," said he, "and I like your attitude. You are a real artist. It is a bargain, John."

They all pressed around to examine Polly's necklace. And it would be hard to say whether she or the twins were the prouder.

Everybody was so nice and jolly that the twins soon forgot to be shy. Presently Jane found herself talking to Alice as if they had been friends for weeks. And when it came time to go home, Alice kissed her and said:

"Come to see me again, Jane. I want to hear all about your wonderful island."

"I need n't have been afraid," thought

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Jane, as they raced home through the quiet streets. "Nice folks are just as *easy* in the city as anywhere else."

And they all agreed that it was the loveliest Christmas Eve that ever happened.

CHAPTER II

THE "REAL LUNCHEON"

IT did not take the twins long to get used to the ways of the Windsor household; for Polly and Phil were delightful hostess and host. The unexpected success of their simple Christmas presents had also given John and Jane self-confidence, and the merry carol-party had made them less afraid of the other city children. Indeed, they had both taken a great liking for Alice Rowell and her father, who had been so kind to them on Christmas Eve. And John was eager to begin the necklace which Mr. Rowell had ordered after seeing Polly's. But they were still shy, and the Windsors had to encourage them continually.

Several days after Christmas Mrs.

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Windsor received a telegram which called her away from the city for a day or two. In the mean time Polly had invited four girls to luncheon. There were Alice Rowell, who was lame; Blanche Noble, who had admired Jane's singing on Christmas Eve, and two others of the carol-singers — Mary Hale and Ruth Smith. Polly had never before given a "real luncheon," nor had Jane attended one, and both girls were much excited. Mrs. Windsor had given the two maids full instructions, and was sure that everything would be all right. Phil and John were going to a restaurant, for, as Polly said, "boys don't go to *real* luncheons."

On the morning of the luncheon-day, directly after breakfast, when Mr. Windsor had gone to his office, Polly ran down to consult the cook. She found the kitchen empty. She hurried upstairs to the servants'

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rooms. No one was there. The maids had slipped away, bag and baggage, without giving notice! Servants do this sometimes directly after Christmas.

"Oh, what shall we do!" cried Polly in despair. "Here it is nine o'clock, and the girls are coming at one!"

"Could n't you telephone them not to come?" suggested Jane hopefully, seeing a prospect of escape from the social duties that frightened her.

"Oh, no!" said Polly. "That would be horrid. We must have a luncheon some way."

"Can't you telephone for new servants?" said Jane with inspiration.

"Perhaps I can." Polly brightened. But after an agitated fifteen minutes she reported, "No use! No one can come before night."

"I can cook," volunteered Jane. "Often

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I have to cook for ten folks at home. If you'll trust me, I'd so much rather do that than be a lady."

"You *are* a lady, whatever you do," said Polly. "But you must be at the luncheon. Why, it's *your* luncheon. The girls are coming to see you."

"It'll be my luncheon if I cook it," said Jane simply. "I can't do fancy things, but I can get up something nice, I guess. What were you going to have?"

Polly pouted. "Such a nice luncheon!" She read a menu from her notebook. "Bouillon, rolls; chicken croquettes and peas; sweet potato, Southern style; Waldorf salad; cream cheese, toasted crackers; Nesselrode pudding, cakes; chocolate; salted nuts, and candy — we've got *those* anyway."

"Goodness!" cried Jane. "All that for six girls!"

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“That’s a real luncheon; mamma said so,” sighed Polly.

With knitted brows Jane contemplated the ménú. “I don’t know how to do any of ‘em, except the chocolate,” she said. “Well, let’s see what’s ready, to begin with.”

They invaded the pantry. They found cooked chicken, peas in a can, and dough set for rolls,—the cook had done her duty up to the last moment. “I’ll mould up these rolls,” said Jane, setting to work briskly; “and I’ll make a nice fricassée chicken, with peas, mashed potatoes, and lettuce. And here’s cheese and crackers ready, and fruit. You’ll have to give up your ‘bullion,’ Polly. I don’t even know what it is. And ‘Waldorf’ salad and ‘Nesselrode’ pudding! Those vegetables don’t grow on my island; but they sound horrid. I’ll make a lovely floating island that the children at home just

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love, and cream sponge-cake. I guess that's good enough for anybody."

Polly listened half doubtfully, half eagerly. "You are wonderful, Jane," she said. "Of course it will be good, but — but — it won't be like what the other girls would have, I'm afraid."

"Hello!" cried Phil, bursting into the kitchen, with John at his heels. "What's up? Where are Bridget and Annie?"

Polly explained. "Jane says she is going to cook the luncheon," she appealed to her brother. "Ought I to let her? I'm no good myself at cooking."

"You ought to be ashamed to confess it," returned Phil promptly. "Every girl ought to know how to cook."

"Jane's a great cook," volunteered Jane's twin. "You need n't be afraid. I know,

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because I've tasted plenty of her cooking."

"I'll wager she is a good cook!" said Phil.

"But somebody will have to keep running into the kitchen to see about things," objected Polly. "What will the girls think?"

"Who cares what they think? You'll have your own kind of a luncheon in your own way," said Phil, "and I'll bet they'll say it's the best way ever. Wish we were invited!"

"If we only had somebody to wait on table and bring in the things!" sighed Polly.

Phil seemed to have an idea. His eye roamed toward John, and it twinkled mischievously.

"Can't you hire somebody by the hour to wait on table?" he suggested.

"Oh, Phil!" cried Polly, clapping her hands. "Where can we get some one?"

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"I think I can help you there," he answered thoughtfully. "Leave it to me. It will be all right."

"Oh, thank you, Phil!" breathed Polly fervently as the two boys escaped.

Then the girls set to work to prepare the luncheon. In the next two hours Polly was initiated into many culinary secrets, and she was fascinated. Jane was so deft and neat, and did it all so easily! Everything went off just right, without worry or fuss.

Polly attended to the setting of the table, and very pretty it looked, with the best linen and silver and glass, and with the centrepiece of roses which thoughtful Phil sent.

Jane was beating the cake-batter as though her life depended on it. Polly, no less earnest, and swathed in a huge apron, was whipping the whites of the eggs when a



"SCUSE US, MISSIE; WE'S THE ONliest MAIDS THEY IS"

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knock interrupted them. Polly, egg-beater in hand, opened the door, then stepped back startled. There came into the kitchen, from the crisp air outside, two negroes. They wore long ulsters which covered them completely.

“ ‘Scuse us, Missie; Marse Windsor done tole us we was to help at de luncheon-party,” said one.

Polly and Jane stared. “I wanted two maids,” Polly said at last.

“ ‘Scuse us, Missie; we’s the onliest maids they is.” The taller negro bowed low. “We’ll do your job fine, Missie, sure we will!”

Polly gazed helplessly at the pair, who acted very strangely, she thought. They took off their hats and ulsters, and stood revealed in all the glory of red-and-blue livery, white stockings, and buckled

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shoes. Suddenly Jane, with a shriek of laughter, pounced upon the shorter of the two.

“John!” she cried, shaking him. “I’ll never be a twin of yours again!”

“It is John and Phil!” screamed Polly, dancing up and down. “Well, I never! What are you going to do?”

“I’s e ole brack Joe, Missie, and I’s e gwine wait on de table,” grinned Phil. “This coon heah, his name’s Sambo. He gwine open de do’ foh de ladies and pass de foods froo de slide, cayse he’s bashful.”

“Oh, can you do it, boys?” laughed Polly, seizing a forlorn hope. “What will the girls say? Well, this will be a surprise luncheon, indeed! You will behave as nicely as you can, won’t you, Phil?”

“We’s gwine do our bes’, Missie,” declared Phil solemnly, “ain’t we, Sambo?”

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John nodded. He dared not trust himself to speak.

"Well," sighed Polly, "we'll see what happens."

The girls ran upstairs to dress. Presently Jane returned with her green challis covered by an immense apron, and began to put the finishing-touches to the luncheon, for she had to be in the kitchen up to the last moment. She showed John just how everything was to be served, while Polly gave Phil a hilarious lesson in waiting at table.

Suddenly the bell rang. The guests had begun to arrive, Polly and Jane hurried into the parlor to receive them, while John answered the bell. One by one the four girls were ushered gravely into the parlor by the gorgeous footman. How they stared!

"I did n't know you had liveried serv-

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ants!" whispered Mary Hale to Polly, much impressed. "Is n't he grand!"

Polly could hardly keep her face straight. Jane giggled outright, burst into coughing, and made this an excuse to leave the room. Alice Rowell was the only guest who suspected anything. When the little lame girl limped up the steps supported by her father's chauffeur, John forgot for a moment to play his negro part, he was so sorry for her.

"Let me help you," he said gently, offering to lift off her heavy cloak. "You need n't go upstairs."

Alice looked at him sharply, then burst into a peal of laughter. "Oh, how funny!" she cried. "But I won't tell!"

Jane had set her luncheon daintily on the table, and had given the signal to Phil. Then she returned to the library. The six girls made a rather stiff group, with little

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to say; for Polly and Jane were anxious, Alice was trying not to laugh, and the others were wondering about the Windsors' gorgeous new footman.

Then Phil appeared pompously at the door. "Luncheon am served," he announced in his deepest voice. Alice Rowell buried her face in her handkerchief. Polly and Jane rose nervously and led the way into the dining-room.

Perhaps the girls were surprised not to begin with a soup, and to find the hot luncheon already on the table; but the grand butler was helpful, and everything tasted so delicious that they soon forgot to be critical.

It came time for dessert. Phil began to remove the dishes, swaggering more pompously than ever; but as he was passing out with the vegetables, his foot slipped, and

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down he sprawled, full length, the remains of the peas and potatoes flying in every direction.

Alice tittered. It was bad manners, but she could not help it. Phil scrambled up awkwardly and retreated to the kitchen, and they all tried to pretend that nothing had happened; but there was an embarrassing pause. Jane and Polly began to feel nervous. Presently Phil returned, and whispered in Jane's ear, "The chocolate is boiling over. John does n't know what to do!"

Jane turned red, and asked to be excused, vanishing into the kitchen. Polly fidgeted. The girls looked sideways at one another. Only Alice Rowell kept on talking, to fill the awkward pause.

Presently Jane returned, flushed but triumphant.

"I'm sorry," she said simply. "I had to

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attend to the chocolate that was boiling over. You see,—I think I'd better tell, Polly!—you see the regular servants have left, and the — the — colored man is new.” She smiled winningly.

All the girls laughed, and the tension was relaxed as Phil reentered with the chocolate and the dessert. “You made this chocolate, then?” asked Alice Rowell admiringly. “How clever of you!”

Polly seized the cue. “Jane made everything! She cooked the whole luncheon.”

“It is the nicest luncheon I ever tasted!” said Blanche Noble, beaming at Jane. “How did you learn to cook?”

Jane blushed. “I do ‘most all the cooking at home,” she said.

Mary Hale and Ruth Smith looked shocked. They thought cooking was the business only of servants.

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But Alice Rowell said enthusiastically:—

“I should be as proud as a peacock if I were you, Jane. Father says my mother could cook delicious things, and I’m going to ask him to let me learn right away.”

This changed the look of things. What Alice Rowell said was gospel to them all; for Polly and Blanche loved her dearly, and those worldly misses, Mary and Ruth, cared because Alice’s father was the only one who had an automobile of his own; and Alice herself could have anything in the world she wanted, — except, poor dear! the strong, straight limbs of other children.

“But, Jane,” cried Alice Rowell, and her eyes twinkled, “did you arrange the butler, too?”

Then, to the amazement of three, at least, of the guests, the gorgeous butler began to dance. He danced, in from the

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kitchen and down the dining-room, a grand double-shuffle, throwing his arms and legs about as if they were hung on wires. The girls shrieked with laughter, some of them bewildered to see a butler so comporting himself. At last, out of breath, Phil darted into the kitchen and dragged out John, who was weak with suppressed mirth.

“And now, Missie,” said Phil breathlessly, “now Sambo and ole brack Joe gwine give you notice. This job am too frazzling for a po’ niggah,” and the pair bowed, and backed out of the room.

There was no more stiffness or lack of conversation at that luncheon-party.

“I wish all luncheons were like this,” said Blanche Noble. “Thank you so much, Polly, for asking us.”

“Thank Jane!” said Polly, hugging her friend. “It was *her* luncheon.”

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“I have an idea about a cooking-club. I’m going to ask Father,” called Alice Rowell from the automobile.

“Oh, what is it?” begged the others eagerly.

But Alice only waved her hand and laughed as she moved away.

“John and I have an idea, too,” said Phil that night when they were talking over the doings of the day. “And there won’t be any girls in it.”

“Then it won’t be any good,” said Jane.

“You wait and see!” retorted Phil.

CHAPTER III

THE BOYS' CLUB

IN a day or two, as she had promised, Mrs. Windsor came back to the home that had sorely missed her, and to new servants who needed a mistress's hand. She found Polly eager to learn cooking, thanks to Jane's famous luncheon-party.

"I think it is a splendid thing to start a Cooking Club," said Mrs. Windsor, when Polly told her of the new plan. "Our Janechen is giving us some capital new ideas," and she stroked Jane's hair affectionately.

"Oho! Clubs are trumps!" cried Phil. "We fellows have formed a club, too, and we are going to have the first meeting to-morrow night."

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"What is your club for?" asked Jane.

"Oh, just to have a good time," said Phil.
"Every fellow has to do something. If he
can't do a stunt, he gets no supper."

"Is John going?" asked Jane.

"Sure he is!" cried Phil.

"I can't do any stunt," declared John.

"I shan't go without you," asserted Phil.
"You can do something, you old duffer!
Why, you can do more things with one hand
than I can with two!"

"Pshaw!" protested John again. "I
have n't any parlor-tricks. When I see you
other fellows showing off, I feel like an old
Robinson Crusoe from a desert island. It
is n't like that at home. Let 'em come on
down to the Island, and I'll show 'em
things."

"That's just what I'm saying," said Phil
triumphantly. "You can do things enough,

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only they are of a different kind. The fellows would be tickled to death to see you tie a Turk's-head knot."

"Would they, though?" said John wondering.

"You bet they would! You take along a coil of rope, and I'll wager your 'turn' will make the hit of the evening."

"Well," said John, "I'll try it. I don't want you to stay at home on my account."

"Who's going to have the supper?" asked Polly, interested as an amateur cook.

"Tom Russell. We are to meet at his house. Tom's been sore ever since he missed the Christmas fun on account of the measles, and he says he is going to make up now. He is planning to cook us a Welsh rabbit."

"Pooh!" said Polly. "Boys can't cook."

"Can't they, though!" cried Phil. "You just wait till we tell you about it."

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“Yes; be sure to remember how it’s made,” charged Jane.

Tom Russell had a “den” of his own at the top of the house, where he could make all the racket he chose, morning, noon, or night, without disturbing any one; a blessed privilege for a boy of fourteen. On the Friday night when the new Club was to be inaugurated, eight boys of assorted sizes, but of about the same age, clumped like young colts over the three flights of stairs and exchanged the secret “grip” with the host. John found that he knew most of the boys already. They had formed part of the group of carol-singers who had serenaded this very house on Christmas Eve when Tom was abed, very cross and spotty.

Tom had a huge wood-fire roaring on the hearth. There were no chairs, but plenty of

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fur rugs around the fire, on which the boys were invited to squat. In a corner a table, set out with a blazer and various dishes holding mysterious ingredients, looked like a magician's stand. It was the rabbit of the future. The walls were covered with pennants, baseball masks and gloves, snowshoes, theatre-posters, trophies of all sorts, — the wholesome rubbish dear to the schoolboy's heart. John thought he had never seen so jolly a room, though he liked Phil's better, because it had more books and pictures.

After the club was formally organized, with Tom elected president, Frank Brewer, vice-president, and Phil Windsor, secretary and treasurer, the members voted to leave business for another occasion and to proceed at once to the fun of the evening, for which purpose the club was declared to exist.

The president preluded the evening's pro-

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gramme with a deafening salute on his watchman's rattle. "I'll call on the members by turn," he announced. "The rest of you fellows keep the fire going, and don't mob the performer, however rank he may be. Now, then, Mr. Vice-President."

Frank Brewer was a short, fat boy with red hair. Taking his banjo from the floor beside him, he played a jolly march, to which eight pairs of feet kept time. Boisterous applause followed the last ringing chord, and John clapped louder than any one. He had never heard a banjo before, and was thrilled by the charm of it.

The president called next on Will Barton. Will was a tall fellow with a solemn, long face and merry eyes. He gave a droll recitation in German dialect, which set them all howling with laughter. Long after the others were done laughing, John kept snickering in

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his corner so infectiously that he set the whole room to roaring once more. Never had Barton made such a hit. It was some minutes before the President, wiping his eyes, and gasping for breath, found strength to wind the rattle and call on the next member.

“Raoul Leroy.” A handsome, dark lad, straight and supple, sprang up. “Claude and I must do our turn together,” he said. “We’ll show you a fencing-trick or two.” The other brother, so like Raoul that you could hardly tell them apart, scrambled to his feet, stripping off his jacket as Raoul had done. The pair donned masks and fencing-pads, and took foils from the corner. The other boys drew closer against the walls, to give them room, and watched fascinated while the pair fenced like the heroes of French romance, closely matched. Suddenly Raoul gave a spring, a bend, a turn of the

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wrist, and Claude's foil went spinning across the floor.

"Bravo!" cheered the boys. Claude rescued his weapon good-naturedly, and both saluted the circle. It was a graceful exhibit of breeding and skill. John wondered if he could ever learn to do things like that.

Next, Charlie Young gave imitations of famous actors, which pleased the other boys hugely. But as John had never seen any actor or any theatre, he missed part of the fun. When Phil Windsor's name was called, he offered to do his famous double-shuffle, which had convulsed the guests at Polly's luncheon.

"Shake away," said Frank Brewer, "and I'll tickle the tune on my banjo." So the floor was cleared, and the guttural instrument began to chuckle merrily. Phil, with elastic joints, set the walls to trembling from

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his strenuous gyrations, aided by clappings and stamps from all the other hands and feet in the room. Even without the make-up and costume of "ole brack Joe" Phil was a howling success. And again John was envious.

When Tom called next the name of Grover Hollis, a roly-poly boy, with apple cheeks and a pale pompadour, hopped up, and demanded a piano.

"Ah, g'wan!" chorused the others.
"There's no piano here. Do something else."

"I can play the fiddle, but there is n't any fiddle here; or a hand-organ, but I can see only monkeys!" retorted Hollis.

"No stunt, no supper," warned the President.

Hollis looked pained. "I am so hungry!" he protested. "What to do? Ha! I know!" And promptly throwing off his shoes he upset himself and proceeded to walk on his

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hands around the room. He ran, he hopped, he danced, always with waving feet in the air. Then he began to turn somersaults, rolling himself up like a ball, until, out of breath, he lay quite still on the bearskin rug. John was amazed. He had not guessed that city boys could do this sort of thing, and play the piano and fiddle too!

“I vote Hollis has earned his supper!” shouted Phil, giving the round body a poke where the ribs would have been had he not been obviously boneless. Carter Smith followed this “turn” with a funny story of something that had happened to him once in Germany; and then the President himself favored them with a song. Tom had a mellow tenor voice which the Christmas carols had missed. John listened with such delight, and was enjoying himself so undisturbed in his dark corner, that he quite for-

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got every one had performed except himself, and that it was his turn.

"It's up to you, Hodges," suggested the President colloquially. "Phil says you've got a stunt up your sleeve. Let's have it."

John started, and shrank back into the corner. The eyes of the whole circle were on him, and he felt ready to sink through the floor.

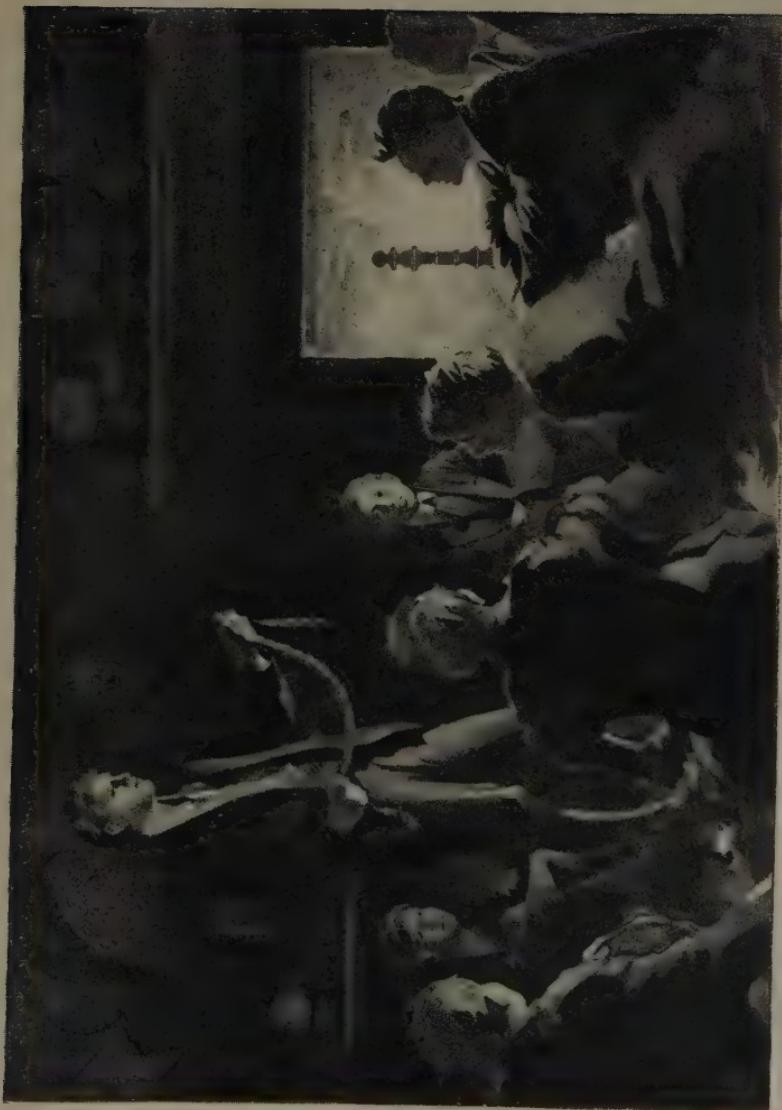
Phil gave him a poke with a billet of wood. "Go on!" he whispered. "Throw out the life-line!"

John rose awkwardly, pulling the length of rope out of his pocket. "Phil thought you might like to see some of the knots that sailors use," he said timidly. "I can show you how they tie and splice, if you like."

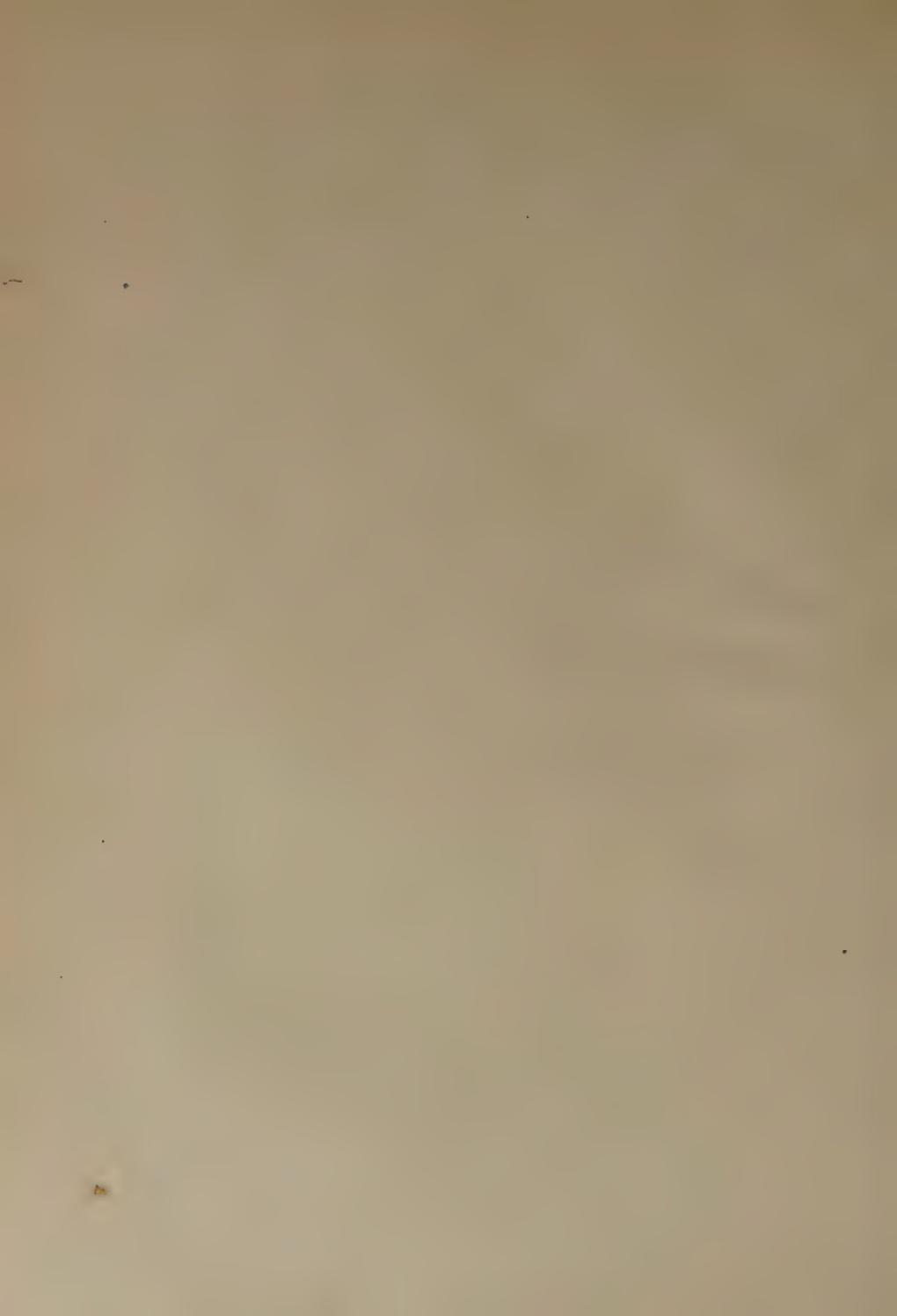
"Good stunt!" approved the President. "Get out into the middle of the room, so we can all see you, Hodges."

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John obediently sat himself in the centre, and the others drew up closely about him. He began with a simple hitch. At first his fingers were all thumbs, and he found it hard to do anything with the rope; but as he saw that all the boys were interested, he gained courage and made the rope slide through his fingers with a skill that seemed like legerdemain to the watchers. He explained "bights," "hitches," knots of every kind and description. He showed them how to splice a rope in half a dozen different ways. He played sailors' tricks on them with ends of twine that mysteriously joined themselves, and knots that came untied without fingers. He evolved a wonderful Turk's-head of intricate braiding, and showed them how to make enviable watch-fobs from mere hemp. He explained the practical difference between a hard knot



"HE EXPLAINED 'BIGHTS' AND 'HITCHES' OF EVERY KIND"



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and an unlucky "granny." Presently eight boys had pieces of string, and were busily experimenting on their own account.

"By Jove! How did you learn it all?" cried Grover Hollis admiringly.

"Why, my father is a fisherman," said John simply. "I have to know all about boats, and ropes, and lines."

"Can you sail a boat?" asked Tom Russell. Tom's mother had put her foot down on the wrong side of the question for him.

John looked at Phil, and they both laughed.

"Well, I should say!" remarked Phil. "His father is the best sailor on the Island, and John is pretty near the next best."

The boys looked at John with great respect.

"Say," said Tom Russell, handling the rope which, with John's help, he had tied

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into a clever slip-noose, "with a knot like this you might save a fellow's life."

"You might," said John quietly.

"I'll bet he's done it," whispered Carter Smith to Phil. "Has n't he?"

Phil looked sidewise at John. "He would n't want me to tell," said he, "but he saved my life once."

"Oh, what was it? Tell about it!" begged the boys who were nearest Phil.

"You shut up, Phil!" cried John, turning very red. "It was n't anything."

"Tell how it happened, Phil," commanded the President.

"Why, it was three years ago, when we were little kids," began Phil. "We could n't either of us swim then. I was out alone, contrary to orders, paddling around in an old leaky dory, and somehow or other it upset, and I found myself floundering in

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the water. I yelled for help, and John came running down the beach. He had a piece of rope in his hands, and he called out to me to hang on to the boat. But the dory was upside down, and I could n't catch hold. Then John waded out up to his shoulders and flung the rope at me, with a slip-knot in the end. I managed somehow to get it round my body, and John held on, yelling until his father came to help. By that time the waves were knocking him about and kept going over his head. They hauled me out; then they dragged up John, and carried us both ashore. But it took them longer to pull John through, for he was about all in. Good old John!"

"Bully for John!" cried the President, and the others shouted, "Hear! Hear!"

But John said sheepishly, "Pshaw! It was n't anything. Hang you, Phil!"

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They were all so interested in John's knots and Phil's story that they had actually forgotten about supper. Suddenly the President glanced at the clock.

"Jove!" he exclaimed. "What about that rabbit? Now, then, fellows, before we end the exercises of the evening let's all sing, 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow!'" He clapped John's shoulder heartily, and the chorus was sung with a will.

After that Tom proceeded to light the blazer and make the rabbit, which they all felt that they had richly earned, and which, in spite of Polly's prophecy, turned out to be what Will Barton called "a hopping success."

But Phil and John were so excited that they forgot to note just how a rabbit is achieved. It remained for the Cooking Club to find out the secret for themselves.

CHAPTER IV

THE THEATRE PARTY

JANE and John were going to the theatre! It was something which they had never done before, and they were greatly excited. They scarcely knew what a theatre was, except that it was where actors "played things." They fancied that perhaps it was something like a Sunday-school picnic. Mr. Rowell and Alice had invited them to go to see Madame Blanque, the most famous actress of the day, and Polly and Phil were delighted because they were all to "sit in a box." Sit in a box! The Twins wondered what fun that could be!

Mr. Rowell and Alice called for them in the automobile, and drove them smoothly to the door of the theatre, where a huge crowd

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was pouring in; for Madame Blanque was to play one of her famous parts that afternoon. Jane's heart beat eagerly as they followed the surging crowd down the marble corridors and over the gay crimson carpets. The usher led them to an upper box next the stage, and presently Jane found herself sitting close to the edge of a great gilded basket, which seemed hung from a sky of dazzling brilliance. She gazed bewildered at the gay horseshoe of light and color, with tier after tier of eager faces turned in one direction toward a great curtained frame. Music began, and Jane thought that this must be the play.

But suddenly a little bell tinkled somewhere. The orchestra ceased playing, and the lights went out. Jane started, and cried, "Oh!" fearing that an accident had happened; but Alice Rowell squeezed her hand,

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and whispered, "It's all right. The play is going to begin. Just watch the curtain!"

Then Jane saw a row of brilliant lights blossom out at the base of the great picture-frame. The green-and-gold curtain began to draw slowly up, and the play began. But Jane immediately forgot that it was a play; it was so beautiful, the world beyond there with its gardens, and flowers, and trees, and real people in the loveliest clothes, saying real things to one another in real voices. She sat spellbound.

In the first act the beautiful heroine was grieving because her lover was far away, serving in a dangerous war, and she feared that he was dead. Madame Blanque acted marvelously. When the curtain fell, the tears were rolling down Jane's cheeks, and John fumbled with his handkerchief. But

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they need not have been ashamed, for the whole house was sniveling.

"Oh, is that all?" cried Jane, wiping her eyes and looking greatly distressed. "Must we go home without knowing what happened next? Oh, I can't bear it!"

Laughingly they told her that in a few minutes she would see.

"How beautiful she is!" rhapsodized Jane, speaking of Madame Blanque. "Oh, I should so love to be an actress like her."

"Humph!" said Mr. Rowell to himself, frowning a little as he noted Jane's flushed cheeks and dewy eyes. "I wonder if I ought to have brought her. Suppose she should go back to her Island stage-struck and discontented! A silly child might. — Yes, she is very beautiful," he said aloud; "but she looks tired and sick to me, in spite of paint and powder. It is a hard life she leads!"

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Jane stared. She did not know what he meant by "paint and powder" and "a hard life."

The second act showed the lover, wounded but alive, on the way back to the beautiful lady of the garden. Jane sparkled and smiled, for everything was coming out all right. But Madame Blanque appeared still plunged in sorrow. The audience knew, but the heroine did not, that the lover was near, — was even now in the very town where his lady lived, waiting only for the signal to appear to her. But her bitter enemy had told her that he was dead.

The great actress wept, and real tears ran down her cheeks. She wrung her hands and moaned; and Jane sighed audibly, "Oh, dear! If she only knew!"

"*Sh!*!" warned Polly, but Jane did not hear.

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The anguish of Madame continued until at last she fell prostrate on the floor and lay apparently lifeless. Jane could bear it no longer. She leaned from the box and stretched her hands pityingly to the prostrate figure.

“Oh, please don’t!” she cried, and her high voice rang startlingly across the proscenium. “He is not really dead. He is quite safe. He is coming back to you now!”

Polly and Alice gasped, and pulled Jane back into her seat, greatly mortified; for at her cry the play had stopped. The actors and actresses were staring up at them. The faces of the audience, too, strangely white in the dim auditorium, were all turned to the box whence the interruption came. Suddenly Jane realized where she was, and sank down in her chair, scarlet with shame and confusion.



"OH, PLEASE DON'T!" SHE CRIED

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“Now you have done it!” growled John, giving her a pinch. “Are n’t you ashamed to make a spectacle of yourself?”

But, while the play still halted, Madame Blanque sat up and turned tear-dimmed eyes on Jane. She looked wistfully a moment, then threw her a little kiss, with a smile sad, but so sweet that the girl forgot her confusion, and smiled back.

“I am glad I told her!” she said to herself.

Now, Madame being a very great actress, the play went on from that point as if nothing had happened. At the end of the act the theatre-party in the box became once more the target for merry eyes, and the children began to tease Jane for what she had done. But in the midst of their talking and laughing an usher came in and spoke to Mr. Rowell.

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"The Manager is here," he said, "and would like to speak with you."

A tall, dark gentleman stood between the curtains. "Madame Blanque begs me to ask if you will allow the little girl to speak with her behind the scenes," he said; "I mean the girl who interrupted the play."

"Why does Madame wish to see her?" asked Mr. Rowell.

"Madame is very sad to-day. She can hardly play. She says, to speak with the child will help her. May she come? Madame will see no one but the child I myself will take her there and back."

Mr. Rowell hesitated, then, looking at the children's awestruck and expectant faces, he beckoned to Jane. "You would like to go?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" cried Jane, clasping her hands. "I will try to comfort her."

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Mr. Rowell smiled grimly. "Well, it will be something for you to remember all your life," he said.

The manager and Jane left the box together, leaving the other children in a state of wild excitement. To think of it! Jane was "going behind," something which they had never done. Jane, who had never been to the theatre, was going to talk with Madame Blanque herself. And Jane was not afraid!

"I would give anything to be in her place," said Polly enviously. "But I should have been frightened to death, all the same, when I got that message."

Meanwhile the Manager and Jane threaded their way over dark stairs, through a jealously guarded doorway and down narrow, murky alleys between painted boards that clumsily represented trees and scenery. Men in shirt-sleeves hurried about shouting to

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one another. Workmen hoisted landscapes up into the air, and let houses down. The lovely flower-gardens turned out to be paint and sham. Jane began to understand that all the things which she had been seeing were make-believe.

They came to a door on which the Manager knocked. A deep voice said, "Come in!" The manager pushed Jane forward, and she found herself in a stuffy, untidy little room, with dresses, gewgaws, and draperies scattered everywhere. In front of a mirror, in an easy-chair, lay the great actress holding a bottle of smelling-salts to her nose. Her eyes were red with weeping, and her cheeks were strangely pink and white. A maid hovered anxiously in the background.

"Ah, you are the blessed child!" said Madame in her thrilling voice, bending for-

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ward eagerly. "You spoke to me just now from the box. You said comforting things. How did you know? Why did you do such a thing?"

"I don't know," said Jane timidly. "I just had to. I knew it was true, and that you ought to be told."

"True!" cried Madame eagerly. "I feel somehow that you do know, and foretell me the truth. Listen, I will tell you something, dear child. Just before the curtain rose I had a telegram from far away where my dear husband is. It said: 'Your husband has been dangerously injured in an accident. It is feared he will die.' But I had to go on with the play, for the people were waiting. Oh, it was torture! No, it was not acting to-day. They were real tears I shed. I thought I should have died! I did lose consciousness; then I heard your voice,

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like a little angel from heaven up there, crying, ‘He is not dead. He is safe. He will come back to you!’ It recalled me to life; I was able to go on. I shall finish the play, thanks to you.”

Jane stared, only half understanding all that Madame said in her tragic, thrilling voice. “I never saw an actress before. You are very beautiful,” she exclaimed suddenly. “I wish I were like you.”

“Ah, no!” cried the actress passionately. “Never wish that! We lead the hardest of lives. We must smile when we are sick and sorrowing. We must be parted from those we love. We must live in the midst of shams, and be part sham ourselves. Marie, my make-up!”

The maid came forward and began to renew Madame’s tear-stained complexion. Jane stared in horror.

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“Have you never seen a play before?” asked the actress.

Jane shook her head, still wonder-eyed. “I come from an island where there is no theatre,” she said simply.

“Ah, happy isle!” sighed the actress wearily. “Go back there, dear little Pink-and-White, and never dream of being an actress like me. It is a life only for those who must follow a call to it, and I see you are not one of those. Go home and forget the life of powder and paint and pasteboard. Love the theatre only as you see it from the front.”

“Yes,” said Jane readily.

“Tell me your name, dear,” continued Madame, “and where you live.” Jane gave her the Windsors’ address, which she wrote down in a jeweled notebook. Then she drew Jane gently toward her, and kissed her on

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the forehead. "Dear child," she said, "pray to-night that your words come true.—Now, that is my call. You must go. Good-bye, dear Jane."

The maid opened the door, and Jane found the Manager waiting for her. He led her back through the ordered confusion of the stage to the box and the expectant party.

"Oh, what did she say? What did she do?" they questioned eagerly.

And Jane told them.

"Oh!" cried Alice, "Madame Blanque kissed you, Jane! How exciting!"

"How jealous this big audience would be if it knew!" chuckled Phil.

John said nothing. He was wondering at Jane. "Did she say she'd adopt you, and help you to become a great actress like her?" fluttered Polly, who was romantic.

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“No,” answered Jane; “she told me to go home to the Island and to remember how often an actress is hiding real tears to please the audience. She is very beautiful, but — I had rather see her from here. It is nicer here.”

“Much nicer, Jane. Much better,” said Mr. Rowell heartily. “Try to forget how it all looked behind there, and enjoy the last act. Here it begins.”

The last act was a happy one. Madame Blanque laughed, and smiled, and was radiant, and everything came out right in the end. The curtain rose again and again, in response to rapturous applause and cries of “Brava! Brava!” in which the children joined, waving handkerchiefs, stamping and cheering in wild enthusiasm. At last the actress looked up at the box and threw a kiss to Jane.

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“Jane, you have made a hit,” said Phil, “on your very first appearance!”

Jane went home in a daze. “The play is so beautiful,” she said, “and I am so pleased that it came out right after all. But I’m glad I told her beforehand. She might have worried herself to death!”

You see, in spite of her visit “behind,” Jane scarcely realized that a play is not real. In her mind she mixed up the story of the play with what Madame had told her. Madame Blanque was a very great actress indeed, who wrought miracles in her audience.

“I wonder, oh, I wonder,” said Polly, “if Jane spoke like a Prophet and Madame’s husband really will get well.”

CHAPTER V

BACK TO THE ISLAND

ONE morning, a few days after the theatre-party, a messenger rang the bell of the Windsors' house and left a large package, tied up in snowy paper with blue ribbons, directed in enormous sprawling letters for "Miss Jane Hodges." Jane was not used to receiving specially delivered parcels, and she was so excited that she could hardly untie the ribbons. The other children gathered about, speculating as to what it might be.

"I think it is a delayed Christmas present," said Polly. "Somebody mislaid it and has just found out the mistake."

"I guess it's an advertisement for something," said Phil, "only they don't usually

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send advertisements in such swell wrappings."

"I guess it's a calendar," said John. "But who'd be sending calendars to Jane?"

"I would," declared Phil, "if I thought she wanted one; and there are others, too. Jane has made a hit in this town, I can tell you!"

"What do you yourself think it is, Jane?" asked Polly eagerly.

"Oh, I don't know!" cried Jane, unwrapping the paper with eager fingers and sniffing a perfume that she remembered. "Perhaps — perhaps — yes! Here's a note and a picture, *her* picture."

"Whose picture?" cried the other three together, craning their necks to see.

"Madame Blanque's!" said Jane delightedly. "Oh, how beautiful!" And she held out for them to see a splendid photograph

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of the great actress in the part which they had seen her play at the memorable matinée, with her autograph sprawled across the corner in truly dramatic fashion.

“Oh, you lucky girl! What a treasure; and a note, too! What does she say, Jane?” begged Polly, dancing up and down with excitement. “I’m sure she wants to adopt you. I said so from the first.”

“Nonsense!” said Jane, laughing. “She writes queerly, but I think I can make it out.”

And she read haltingly Madame’s peculiar scrawl, which looked more like a barbed-wire fence than anything else: —

DEAR LITTLE JANE: I want you to know that you spoke truth at the theatre the other day. My husband is alive and is coming back to me! My little good angel, I wish

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you all the happiness in the world, but not on the stage. Go back to your island home and be content even if you must stay there always. But do not forget, wherever you may be, your affectionate friend,

CLEMENTINE BLANQUE.

"Indeed, I shall not forget," Jane's eyes shone. "I shall keep this always as my greatest treasure."

"I should think so!" exclaimed Phil. "I'd give a good deal to have either the picture or the letter for mine. But to have them both! Gee! You *are* a wonder, Jane. Why could n't this have happened to me?"

"Because you have n't any imagination," laughed Polly, poking him in the ribs playfully.

"Because you are n't Jane," said John, looking sidewise at his twin.

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“Because you know better than to act as silly as I did,” said Jane, blushing when she thought how the people had stared at her. “But I am glad it happened, all the same, the first time I ever went to the theatre.”

“We are all glad that you are just as you are, and do just what you do, Jane dear!” cried Polly, suddenly catching Jane around the neck and kissing her. “Oh, what shall we ever do when you go home!”

The weeks of the Twins’ visit to the city were drawing rapidly to a close. Never had time gone so fast for John and Jane, who had made so many good friends and had enjoyed so many good times that they could not bear to think of going away. But they knew that it had been hard for their father and mother to let them come at all; both on account of the expense, and because the

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Twins were the oldest of the family, and were needed to help at home and at the fish-house. Besides, the spring term of their island school was about to begin. So they tried to be cheerful about going back; and indeed they were very eager to see the home folks again, and tell them about the wonders of the big city. Sometimes people want to do opposite things at the same time.

Mr. Rowell had taken a great interest in John. He had not forgotten their first talk together on Christmas Eve, and the order given for a pendant similar to Polly's. Curious to see how the boy worked, he had introduced John to an artist friend who had a metal-working outfit at his studio, and had urged John to try his hand at filling the order immediately. Luckily, John had brought with him a number of the green stones, such as he had set for Polly and Phil;

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and Mr. Rowell had only to supply the copper for the setting. But he had done more than that. He had invited John to his studio to see some quaint bits of jewelry which he had picked up in his travels. He had taken him in his automobile to the Art Museum, and had obtained permission for him to examine in his own hands some of the finest stone-setting in the world; and he had fired John with the desire to become a master in this most beautiful art.

“You can, John,” said Mr. Rowell, clapping him on the shoulder. “You have natural taste and a sense of beauty. I have watched you work, and I see you have the knack and perseverance. All you need is some lessons and practice. And then, with that beryl mine of yours at home, and other resources, too, for all we know, you can make your fortune.”



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Meanwhile, in the leisure minutes of his visit, while Phil was at school, or studying,—for Phil's vacation ended before his did,—John kept at work on Alice's pendant; and before the visit was over he had finished it to Mr. Rowell's satisfaction. John had said nothing to Jane about it, for he had been afraid that he might fail after all.

But one night, two days before they were to go back to the Island, he ran up to her room and dropped something into her lap. It was two ten-dollar greenbacks.

"Oh, what is this?" cried Jane, looking up amazed.

"It is the first fruits of my trade, Jane!" cried John triumphantly. "It is the money Mr. Rowell promised for my pendant, which I have just finished. I do believe I can make a living, Jane, after I've had some lessons. And it's such fun! Well, anyway, I have got

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something to show for this vacation besides a good time, and I can pay Father back the price of my ticket."

Then Jane launched her surprise. "So can I!" she cried, jumping up and taking something from her dressing-table. It was a little silver purse, and inside it were four five-dollar gold-pieces, new and shining.

"Hello!" cried John. "Where did you get this? Is it all yours, Jane, really?"

"The Cooking Club gave it to me this afternoon," said Jane. "I didn't want to take it; but Alice Rowell said that I had been their teacher for so many lessons in plain cooking,—and so I have, John,—and that this was what they would have had to pay any teacher. Just think of that! The purse itself is their little remembrance to me, because they said that there would n't have been any Cooking Club if I had n't

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come; and I guess that's true, too. I told them I should save some of this money to take lessons myself some day, and learn to be a real teacher."

"We'll both try to earn the money and come back here together to study," said John with enthusiasm. "Then, when you are a wonderful school-teacher and I'm a famous goldsmith, we will buy the whole Island for the family."

"But we'll let the Windsors come there every summer, just the same," said Jane.

"Of course; and the Rowells, and the others, too, who have been so good to us. What a colony it will be!" John laughed.

Dreaming pleasant things, the Twins went down to dinner. Mrs. Windsor held an open letter in her hand. "I have just received a letter from your mother, Twins," she said, smiling at their happy faces.

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“Oh, are they all well at home?” cried Jane with sudden fear.

“I believe so,” said Mrs. Windsor. “Now I must tell you what I have done. We all want you to stay so much, and you seemed so happy and contented here, that I wrote to ask your mother and father if they could not spare you for a longer time. In fact, I suggested that we should like to keep you until the schools close here, when we will bring you back to the Island ourselves.”

“Mamma! How splendid!” cried Polly, clapping her hands and dancing up and down. “And what did Mrs. Hodges say?”

“She said ‘Yes,’ ” replied Mrs. Windsor, smiling more than ever. “She says, ‘Let them stay if they wish to. Let them decide for themselves what is best.’ ”

“Hurrah!” cried Phil. “What larks we will have! The Cooking Club and the Fun

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Club will have to give a special celebration, you bet!"

But Jane and John looked at one another doubtfully. "Mother wrote me last week that she was so glad I was coming home," said Jane. "The baby had not been well, and she is very tired with the cooking and all. The other children need me to help them when school opens, too. Mother is so good to be willing I should stay."

"She said nothing of this in her note," commented Mrs. Windsor, glancing at her husband.

"Father has rheumatism, and he's got his hands full with the nets, and the new lobster-pots, and overhauling the boat for summer," said John dubiously. "I guess he needs me, all right; and there's school, too."

"You could go to school here, you know," said Polly eagerly.

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"And John can keep on with his metal-work. Mr. Rowell says he's a wonder," Phil added.

Mr. Windsor put in a cordial word. "We would like to have you stay," he said. "You seem as if you belonged here. You have done the children good."

The Twins stood looking at one another for some seconds without speaking. Each knew how much the other wanted to stay, and that made it all the harder. But at last, with a great sigh, they both turned at the same moment to Mrs. Windsor and shook their heads.

"I can't," said Jane with a trembling lip. "Oh, I'd like to; but Mother needs me too much. I must go back to help her."

"No," echoed John, "Father has been awfully generous to let us come. I can't

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leave him in the lurch now. I should feel like a pig."

"Oh, Twins!" protested Polly.

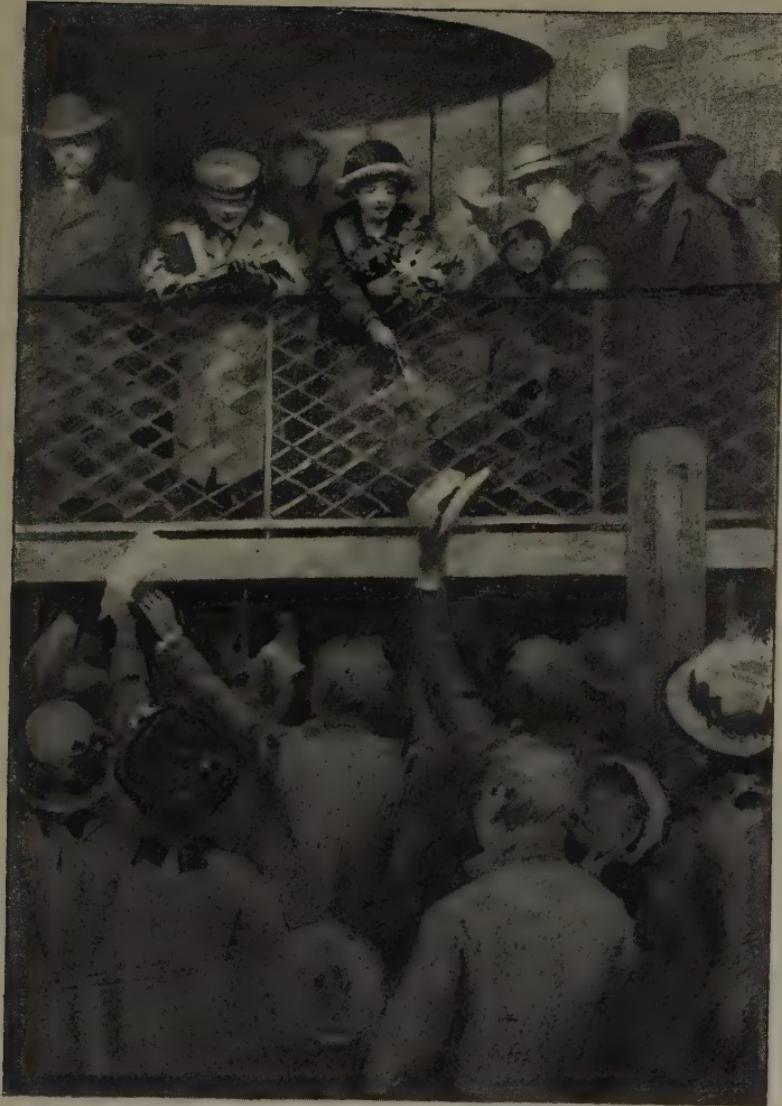
"Hang it, John!" growled Phil. But Mr. and Mrs. Windsor looked at one another, and nodded approval."

"You are good children," said Mrs. Windsor, "I dare say you are quite right, and we have no business to urge you selfishly in the matter."

"They won't lose anything by it in the end," said Mr. Windsor.

After the children had gone to bed, Mr. and Mrs. Windsor sat up for a long time discussing plans for the future. "Another year we must arrange for the Twins to come and stay with us, and study in earnest," said Mrs. Windsor.

"Yes," said her husband. "Rowell was speaking about it yesterday. In case our



"THERE WAS A MERRY COMPANY TO SEE THEM OFF"

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plan to keep them now failed, he wanted Polly and Jane to study with Alice next winter. His little girl cannot go to college; but he says Jane shall if she wants to. Alice is very fond of her, as our own Polly is. John can go to public school and study metal-work at the same time."

"We will arrange everything this summer when we are at the Island," said Mrs. Windsor. "We will invite the Rowells to make us a visit. I know it will do Alice a world of good."

When John and Jane started on their long journey home to the Island, there was a merry company to see them off. The Cooking Club, headed by Polly, and the Fun Club, under Phil's leadership, were there in full numbers. Jane, with her arms full of flowers, and John, laden with maga-

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zines and boxes of candy, leaned over the steamer rail, exchanging last words with the others on the wharf. The Twins were touched by the proofs of so many friendships made in the few weeks of their visit, and they could not be wholly sad, even though they were going away.

“Well, it won’t be so very long until summer,” called Polly, sniffing a little. “We shall open the cottage as soon as school closes, and Alice is coming to visit us right away. She says she can hardly wait.”

“Oh, good!” said Jane, beaming.

“And the boys are all coming down to camp the first of July,” called Phil. “What larks we’ll have! You will show us everything on the Island, won’t you, John?”

“I wonder what they will think of our little house,” said Jane under her breath to her twin.

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“They’ll think it’s all right,” asserted John with enthusiasm. “I’m not afraid, for they are the right sort, all of them.”

“So they are!” said Jane. “And I’m not afraid, anyway; for it’s our dear home, and it’s the best thing we’ve got. And nobody need be ashamed of the best he’s got.”

The whistle sounded, and the gangplank was drawn in.

“Good-bye! Good-bye!” shouted John and Jane, waving their handkerchiefs. “Thank you all for being so good to us!”

“Good-bye, Twins! Rah! Rah! Rah! for the Island Twins!” cried a chorus of friendly voices as the boat moved away, carrying John and Jane into a future full of brave and kindly doings.

THE END

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